

# The National Cooperative Soil Survey: Research Priorities

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## **ABSTRACT**

As the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) evolves beyond the initial inventory of the Nation's soil resources, NCSS cooperators will be engaged in research and investigation projects to develop greater understanding of soil distribution, properties, behavior, and proper interpretation for use and management. A goal of the NRCS is for research projects to originate from the 146 MLRA Soil Survey Areas (SSAs) that have been established across the country, and many will be supported by support from the National Soil Survey Center Research Staff, the Soil Survey Laboratory, and cooperators with interest and expertise in the research area.

The scope of projects will range from those applicable to an individual SSA to those that are a part of a larger regional or national research effort. To help foster the support that a "field centered" research program will need to be successful, a NCSS Research Priorities Committee has been established with the following goals: 1) establish a process through which priority research needs can be identified and, when funds permit, research related to the soil survey missions can be funded by NRCS; help to rebuild the "cooperator network" which includes soil scientists and professionals in academic institutions and state and federal agencies; and ensure that the recommendations from Regional Soil Survey Conference Research Needs Committees are discussed and acted upon at the National Soil Survey Conference.

Membership on the committee includes at least one university cooperator and NRCS soil scientist from each of the four regions of the country and at large members from other NCSS cooperating agencies and organizations. Priority areas that have been identified at this time include new technologies for soil inventories, dynamic soil properties, and whole landscape hydrogeological studies. To maximize extrapolation of results, a secondary consideration is, whenever possible, to focus research on benchmark soils and landscapes that represent regional environmental factors and pedologic processes. The research priorities will change as new techniques become available and as new needs to support the soil survey missions are identified.

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